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ABSTRACT

The goal of this practicum was to teach parents ways to supervise the kinds of television programs their kindergarten-aged children watch and to limit the time they spend watching them. Attempts were made to advise teachers about ways to supplement information provided to parents about educationally sound and appropriate programs for children. The educational intervention for parents consisted of four meetings in which children, parents and teachers participated and interacted with guest speakers from the community and television studios. Discussion focused on data gathering in session 1, on neighborhood programs for children in session 2, on best children's programs on the available channels in session 3, and on individual participant's opinions and feelings about the sessions in session 4. Data were gathered through a Parental Television Questionnaire, a Teacher Television Questionnaire, and a Student Oral Television Questionnaire. Pre-questionnaire results indicated that 80 percent of the kindergarten children devoted a large portion of their time to unsupervised programming. Post-questionnaires were expected to indicate that 80 percent of the respondents curbed television watching and that television programming for students was more closely monitored by parents, faculty, and students. According to post-questionnaire results, positive attitudes toward monitoring television viewing increased by 80 percent. (Author/RH)

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Utilizing Community Resources to Decrease Unsupervised Television Viewing by Kindergarten Children

by David M. Richards

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Utilizing Community Resources to Decrease Unsupervised Television Viewing by Kindergarten Children

Practicum I Submitted to the Faculty of the
Early Childhood Education Program
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

by

David M. Richards

Nova University
Cluster 14
March 4, 1985

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ABSTRACT

Utilizing community resources to decrease unsupervised television viewing by kindergarten children. (Richards, M. David, 1984-85 Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed. D. Early Childhood Education Program. Descriptors: Kindergarten Children/Early Childhood Education/Television Teachers/Television Curriculum/Television Viewing/Unsupervised Programming).

This practicum created viable alternatives to unsupervised television programming and viewing for kindergarten students and their parents. Goals included a means to enlighten the parents about ways to supervise the kinds of programs and limit the time their children spent watching television. In addition, materials were provided to advise teachers about ways to supplement the parent's information on children's programs that are educationally sound and suitable for their age. Also, according to post-questionnaire results, there was an 80% increase in positive attitudes towards monitoring television viewing.

The completed four meetings included parental, teacher, community and television studio input and literature. The parents and teachers considered the meetings and their suggestions invaluable in controlling what their children watch on television.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

A. Description of Community Including Economic and Geographic Factors

The area of Beverly Hills and Morgan Park has long been recognized as one of Chicago's most attractive and desirable residential areas. It is indeed an area of multicultured people with multicultured backgrounds and interests who take pride in their community and enjoy the many benefits and opportunities it offers.

It is a community of predominently single family homes with a unique mixture of architecture ranging from the big, old, gracious turn of the century homes, to the "bungalows of the 20's and 30's and the modern ranch and tri-level homes being built today," (Tarhan & Treech, 1974). Its tree lined streets, excellent schools, parks and recreational facilities, its close proximity to public transportation and to the major expressways combine to make the Beverly Hills/Morgan Park area a show place to live in. Undoubtedly, it offers the best of both suburban and city living and for this reason it is highly

recommended as a desired area in which to live. Nancy Gallagher and Gene Tarpey of The Chicago Tribune claim that no one is typical around these parts. "Beverly Hills/Morgan Park is not a gingerbread community filled with look-alike people. Rather, the area presents an exhilarating tapestry of lifestyles," (Gallagher & Tarpey, 1972).

Occupational characteristics of the Beverly Hills/Morgan Park area were slightly different than the occupational characteristics of the City of Chicago and the rest of the metropolitan area, the most significant difference being the labor force participation rate. The participation rate is the proportion of persons that are gainfully employed or are actively seeking such employment to the total population older than sixteen years of age. This participation rate for the Beverly Hills/Morgan Park community was 52.8 per cent, which was somewhat lower than the Chicago average of 60.8 per cent, and the metropolitan average of 62.0 per cent. This suggests that fewer people in the productive ages were able to work or were willing to work. A relatively high percentage of population in the community is composed of senior citizens; this was also a factor in lowering the

participation ratio.

In 1970, 24.1 per cent of the employed resident work force were professionals; this also showed a percentage increase over 1960. The percentage of clerical workers also gained during the sixties, but those engaged in managerial and administrative occupations declined during the same period. White collar occupations accounted for 71.2 per cent of the resident work force, which also showed an increase over the 68.9 per cent shown in 1960. On the blue collar side, service workers increased their share of the participation rate in 1970 by 4.2 per cent over 1960. Overall, female workers also showed gains in their percentages over 1960.

According to the 1970 census, the median income in the community was increased from $9,425 in 1959 to $14,664 in 1969, or 55.6 per cent over 1959. There was a significant decline in the numbers of families with annual incomes below $10,000, and increases among families with incomes higher than $10,000. The sharpest increase occurred in the number of families with incomes in excess of $15,000. In 1969, about four out of ten families in the community had incomes between $10,000 and $25,000.

Between 1960 and 1970, the population of the Beverly Hills/Morgan Park community increased by five per cent. In 1970, there were 47,741 persons living in the community.

The majority of adults living in this community in 1970 were in the age group forty-five to sixty-five, and their children ranged from five to twenty-five years of age. It was significant that the number of persons between the ages of five and twenty-five increased over the last decade, but the number of children younger than five years decreased substantially, suggesting that the birth rates are declining, and, as a result, the majority of families living in the community are aging. When the children are grown and begin leaving their parents, and if the parents also move to smaller homes or to apartments, the community may witness a substantial change in its family characteristics.

The racial characteristics of the area also changed slightly. During the last decade, the non-white population changed from 4.4 per cent of the total population in 1960 to 6.5 per cent in 1970. This 2.1 per cent increase, which occurred during the sixties, was not evenly distributed throughout

the community. The majority of non-white population was concentrated in the southeastern corner of Morgan Park; and, while a few other areas showed very low percentages of non-white population, the major portions of the community showed all white neighborhoods. Actually, most of the increase in the proportion of non-white population is found outside of the community east and beyond the Beverly/Vincennes Avenues line. The Beverly Hills/Morgan Park area and the suburban communities to the west constituted the all-white communities of the south side.

Probably the most significant family characteristic of the community was the fact that the relative proportion of pre-school age children to the total population was on the decline. As a result, the average household in the community has dropped from 3.4 persons in 1960 to 3.3 in 1970.

Another change in family characteristics was the relative decline in the last decade in the number of families and the relative increase in the percentage of single persons. In addition, there was a marked increase among persons classified as "other relatives of head" which consisted of grandparents, uncles, aunts and the like who were living permanently

with the family in greater numbers.

Husband and wife families predominated, accounting for 83.5 per cent of all families; and their children represented 89.4 per cent of the total population under eighteen years of age.

In the school ages, the majority of children younger then twenty-one years of age were attending elementary schools during 1970. Pre-school age children numbered only about one-third of this amount, indicating a declining trend for the elementary schools in the coming years. The high schools, however, will receive a wave of the elementary enrollment in the next few years, and the junior colleges after that. The available statistics also indicate that there will be a resulting increase in the ranks of young adults fifteen to twenty-five years of age in the seventies and early eighties.

B. Writer's Role and Responsibility

The author is the Learning Disability teacher at the Vanderpoel Magnet School. The job description includes providing resource services for approximately twenty-five students who have been diagnosed as having moderate learning disabilities. In addition, the author conducts a fifth grade reading class one period

daily. The writer working with other faculty members at the Vanderpoel Magnet School of the Humanities, helps plan and develop specific topics for the students that promote an interdisciplinary, integrated curriculum of literature, social studies and the fine arts. Students are given the opportunity to critically examine the cultural and ethical bases of our civilization. To give students a sense of unity of knowledge, an in-depth understanding of the connection between man's past contributions and the civilization of the present, an attempt was made to implement creative experiences in a variety of subject areas.

CHAPTER TWO

Study of the Problem

A. Description of the Problem Situation

The kindergarten children at the Vanderpoel Magnet School attend an all day kindergarten. The thirty-one children are between the ages of five and six years old. The program has been in existence for three years. The transition from half day kindergarten to full day has been made quite smoothly. There are two kindergarten teachers, one of whom teaches all day, while the other teaches only in the morning.

In addition to the two kindergarten teachers, many parents in the past years have voiced their concern about the inordinate amount of time their children have spent watching television outside of school. Many of the parents feel that this excessive television viewing has had a detrimental effect on their children. Heindon (1980) states, "Television has been a scapegoat for almost every adult's anxiety about what's happening to children." He also believes that besides the parents, the 1.8 million teachers who belong to the National Education Association

experience on a daily basis the trauma, anxiety, and frustration in the lives of children. He feels that the teachers like most of the rest of the population think that television viewing has been at least a partial explanation for the often difficult behaviors of today's children.

There is no longer any doubt that the television has had a great influence on the life of the elementary child (LeBaron, 1974). It must be remembered that television has been considered a powerful medium, indeed, an efficient means. All of its power and effectiveness have been derived from its environmental nature. Television has affected all the senses of man. It has affected both sight and hearing directly, and the sense of touch indirectly. It has enhanced a kind of subsidiary demand for tactile contact with what has been seen and heard. Television has become a powerful medium also because of its total dominance over us; it certainly has not allowed for any kind of interference on our part; no one has been able to talk back to his television set. Effortlessly, television has controlled his imagination, the thoughts, and the reactions of its viewers. There has been nothing left to chance while viewing it; no room

has been left for the ingenuity or the initiative of the viewer.

Gotz (1975), feels that television as an active medium has been constantly bombarding the senses, continually massaging them, causing the viewer to become more passive and lethargic, just as a good massage does.

We have all heard the statistics! By the time our students have entered elementary school, they will have spent more time watching television then playing with their fathers. By the time they graduate from high school, they will have been in the classroom 12,000 hours and in front of the television set about 20,000 hours.

Feinberg (1977) claims that television has, without a doubt, become the most influential institution in a student's life. In some respects it has affected a rejection of the "work-now-play-later" ethic, and the philosophy of deferred gratification has been relegated to the pre-video past. He believes that amusement and entertainment have been only as far away as the set. Horatio Alger has been replaced by the Six Million Dollar Man.

But while we must take into consideration

those diminishing returns and all the harmful effects that television has been causing, we must, as well, look at some of the benefits. The fact is television has already had great influence, and it may be in the future more pervasive than it has been.

Briefly stated, the kindergarten children, judging from their familiarity with many television programs have devoted a large proportion of their time to unsupervised programming.

B. Documentation of the Problem

During the pre-registration for kindergarten children entering school in the Fall of 1984, the parents were given a preliminary questionnaire (Appendix A) to determine their attitude in regards to their children's television viewing. Eighty per cent of the parents answered that they felt their children had been watching too much television.

Members of the faculty from the first to fifth grade, were given questionnaires (Appendix B) to determine what influence television viewing had on the achievement of their students. Again the results indicated the significant impact on academic achievement.

C. Analysis of the Problem

In analyzing the problem, there were many causes to be considered. Many parents had inadequate skills to determine the quality or content of television programs for their children. Contributing to the cause was a lack of skill on the part of the parents in selectivity of the programs. Also considered was poor parental supervision. It is noteworthy to mention that family life was often fragmented by the presence of at least one, and in many families two or more television sets. Mother watched dramas; father was absorbed in the sports; and the children watched anything else that happened to be on the tube, as many hours as humanly possible. Levinsohn (1977) says, "Parents no longer supervise their children as they once did. In fact, they no longer have control over them, depending on the tube to keep peace and order in the house." Heindon (1980) when asked the question, where do you feel the responsibility lies for monitoring how much television children watch? He answered, "There is only one place it can be done -- in the home." However, that does not mean it will be done. The current direction of our social structure suggests that children will be subject

to less and less adult controls at earlier and earlier ages. This seemed to be the way things were going.

Many times television was used for babysitting and a system of rewards. Kernan (1982) implied that far more often television has been used as a babysitter. It also has been used as a method of rewarding as well as punishing children.

Leninsohn (1977) believed that television came along just about the time that the experts in childrearing were reaping a fortune trying to help parents learn to cope with their unruly children. During this period Dr. Spock sold millions of books to parents seeking some guidance, also seeking to keep their sanity in the face of extraordinary demands their children were making on them. Swiftly, into their lives came an electronic babysitter who could keep the children not only peaceful and quiet, but also distracted from their own desires and needs. The boom was on; parents bought televisions like crazy until, by 1975, almost every family in the entire nation owned at least one television set.

There is an inordinate importance placed on television as a service of information and entertainment.

For many parents, it is the only affordable entertainment they can give their children. However, this indiscriminate viewing of television by children is noteworthy. Gerber (1972) reported that the average prime-time hour contained eight violent incidents, and the average hour of cartoons, seventeen. Correlational studies have shown that viewing aggressive models on television is associated with aggressive behavior (Chaffee, 1972).

The most incriminating evidence has come from numerous experimental studies showing a casual relation between television violence and viewer aggression (Murray and Kippax, 1979).

Finally excessive viewing has, according to Johnson, Cooper and Chance (1983), had some effect on school achievement and I.Q. Generally, many feared that television would have a negative impact on achievement because viewing would detract from time children devoted to homework assignments, reading and resting.

D. Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

It is always difficult to select a definite starting point when developing a review of related literature in any given field. The area of television

and youth is no exception. It would seem that studies of television's impact on children became more frequent in the literature of the mid-1950's. In 1955, Paul Lazarfield talked openly about our lack of knowledge concerning television's effect on children. A United States Congressional Investigative Committee at which Lazerfield (1955) testified indicated that we knew little about the effects of televised crime and violence on juvenile delinquency. Voices were being heard from other countries and calls for more research became louder and more frequent.

Some of the early American research conducted during the development of Sesame Street (Luser, 1974; Palmer, 1973), was designed to measure the holding power of various parts of the program. "What are the factors that affect the amount of attention that children devote to a television program? When do children begin to watch television and is the child's viewing pattern variable throughout childhood?" (Palmer, 1973) Anderson and Levin (1976) suggested that certain program characteristics are associated with increased attention by young viewers, namely, the presence of women, children, puppets, eye contacts, peculiar voices, animation, movement, lively music,

rhyming, and alliteration. On the other hand, lack of attention was noted when men, animals, or still drawings were introduced. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) believed that heavy viewers tended to be children who were less bright than the lighter viewers, or perhaps duller children simply find more comfort in television than their more gifted peers.

Kippay and Murray (1977) point out that for those who do not have education or the money or the time for other outlets for themselves or their children, television is the medium of choice. However, television also provides, in a more positive manner, a source of information and relaxation for most. It does appear that the choice of programs is motivated by certain expectations.

Murdock and Phelps (1973) indicated that children choose not only the sort of programs they like but also the magazines and records which appeal to them. "Their choice seems to be influenced by their social background, by the school system and by the neighborhood setting where they spend most of their time."

There have been many studies initiated in the United States on the impact of television violence

on young children. A recent example is a study conducted by the Surgeon General's research program by Liebert and Baron (1972). The authors studied young children's willingness to hurt one another after viewing aggressive television programs. The children also showed a desire for playing with weapons and aggressive toys. Schramm, Lyle and Parker (1961) investigated the relationship between program preferences and aggressive behavior attitudes and supported the conclusion that viewing preference for aggressive television content is related to aggressive behavior and attitudes.

It has been pointed out, by the press, Huesmann, Eron, Lepkovitz and Dubow, (University of Illinois, 1979) that children who are aggressive at age eight are likely to be aggressive at age nineteen and at age thirty. Childhood aggression, as observed in school situations, is predictive of serious anti-social behavior in late adolescence and adulthood. Thus, it is necessary, if we are ever to reduce the extent of aggressive behavior in society, to arrange conditions so that youngsters do not learn aggressive problem solving strategies in the first place.

Although within the family and among his peers, a child may learn to be aggressive, television

is the primary source. A study of a large group of eight year old subjects was followed for ten years, and it was found that the best single predictor to determine how aggressive a young male would be in his late adolescence was the violence of the television programs he watched when he was in middle childhood. Striking, also, are the findings with regard to the subjects' own children (Huesmann, 1983). There seems to be a correlation between the subject's violence viewing at age eight and his children's violence viewing twenty-two years later. Television appears to be a powerful teacher.

Television advertising has had a short history; nevertheless, some amount of information has been gathered on the impact of television commercials on the potential buyers, the children viewers. Public worry over television advertising manifested itself in the Action for Children's Television requests for restrictions on advertising (Action for Children's Television, 1971, 1975, 1978). Charren (1979), the Action for Children's Television spokesman, stated that "Action for Children's Television believes this advertising directed to children is deception."

He suggests that,

1. Psychologically, the ads have been deceiving because children are not capable of understanding the true intent of the commericals.

2. Medically, the ads have been wrong because the emphasis is on foods that do not contain essential nutrients.

3. As a dental matter, the commericals have not indicated the danger of sugar as one of the cavity producing substances.

4. Legally and morally, television advertising has not been fair to children because their immaturity prevents them from understanding the bias in advertising.

Early research on advertising and its effect on children was conducted by Ward, Wackman, and Wartella (1977) for the United States Surgeon General's research program. The results indicate that commercials have had considerable effect upon children. Robertson and Rossiteo (1974) studied children's attitudes toward toys advertised on television during the pre-Christmas season. They found that as the days passed

and persistent advertising confronted them, the children became increasingly anxious to obtain the coveted toy. Roberts and Bachen (1981) report that much evidence indicated that children under seven do not discern the underlying purpose of television advertising. It seems likely that there will be increased demands for changes in the nature of advertising which is directed to youthful viewers.

Of all the effects of children's television viewing, the most difficult to measure has been that which deals with his social life. In general, it was the unsupervised outdoor activities that seem to suffer most. Himmelivert, Oppenheim and Vince (1974) found a greater decline in walking and being out with friends than in playing or watching sports. In some ways television can act as a socializing agent, but a recent report (Gerbner, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980) suggests that television's role in fostering conceptions of the world has not made these completions correspond to the world in which the viewer lives. According to Gerbner and his associates, the heavy viewer often has failed to differentiate between the two. It seems reasonable to assume that a child could learn realistic and pro-social values if he

has been introduced to programs based upon accepted behavior.

Fredrick and Stein (1972) found that a brief exposure to Mister Roger's Neighborhood, which stressed the theme of good conduct was associated with increases in cooperation by the young viewer. Coates, Pusser, and Goodman (1976) reported similar increases in pro-social behavior after an introduction to such programs as Sesame Street.

Research indicated that television for children has been both "worrisome and worthwhile." Health Examination survey (1976), Peterson and Zill (1980) found that children spend a great portion of time watching television and that their viewing had increased during the past years. Peterson and Zill (1980) used the National Survey of Children of 1976 to report that although the average viewing time was about two hours per day, the percentage of youngsters who watched more than three hours per day jumped from seventeen per cent in the mid-1960's to twenty-nine per cent in the mid-1970's.

Thus, it is conceivable that the amount of time spent viewing television in the early years of the developing child is "worrisome." Harold (1979)

suggested that changes in policy enacted by television networks and encouraged by industry representatives should further pro-social programming designed to enlighten and inform young viewers.

It would seem most fitting that private action be placed in the first category. Most importantly, parents should become aware of their role in establishing requirements in regard to television viewing. Concerned parents will set limits on the total time children spend with television. With restricted time the child must make choices and, as a result, it is hoped, will become a more discriminating viewer. Mothers and fathers, too, have been encouraged to hear lectures devoted to critical television viewing skills. These discussions have been available in the local schools. Through the activities of teachers, doctors, and police, the parents have learned about various public service groups. They have been encouraged to join local branches of such groups as Action for Children's Television. The writer feels that the implementation of the foregoing information and suggestions by those interested in the welfare of children has been the keynote to the solution of the problem of youngsters' viewing too much television.

CHAPTER THREE

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

A. Goals and Expectations

The goal for this practicum was to provide means to enlighten the parents about ways to supervise the kinds of programs and limit the time their children spent watching television. In addition, it was the author's intent to provide and advise teachers about ways to supplement the parent's information on children's programs that are educationally sound and suitable for their age.

B. Behavior Expected

The desired expectation was to obtain the cooperation of parents to utilize television as a viable part of their child's instruction. Through the use of parent, teacher and student questionnaires, the writer's hope was to be able to obtain a positive response to programs that children watch. Also, it was the writer's intention to correlate television watching with various children's activities, such as hobbies, sports, reading, music, and other

interests.

C. Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

It was the writer's intention to stay abreast of all current sources relating to this problem. In addition the writer also documented in a daily log all other pertinent information relating to this problem.

D. Measurement of Objectives

The questionnaires found in Appendix A, B, and C were based upon a rating scale of one to five. It allowed the individual a means for assessing and evaluating the types of programs that interest children. Moreover, other questions of significant importance were analyzed to help establish a relationship of children's viewing habits to parental supervision and intervention.

Both pre- and post-questionnaires to parents, teachers and students were given with the purpose of measuring the suggested goals and objectives.

E. Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

Three written evaluative instruments were

designed by the writer for this practicum, and copies are included in the Appendices.

The author constructed the pre- and post-questionnaires in order to focus on the specific problem. Major objectives were given top priority. The questionnaires were intentionally designed by the writer as an efficient means of collecting pertinent data associated with the problem. The following were considered important advantages for the use of the questionnaires:

1. Questions were direct, simple, and easy to understand.
2. A number of individuals could be contacted at the same time.
3. Each respondent would receive identical questions.
4. Respondents would answer their questions at their own convenience.
5. Responses were easily tabulated and percentages given.

A. Parental Television Questionnaire was administered and collected during the first month of school and then again at the end of the third school month. This modified couplet designed survey

had a one to five rating scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

2. Teacher Television Questionnaire also was given at the first and third month intervals. The rating scale also ranged from one to five.
3. Student Oral Television Questionnaire were given orally to each of the kindergarten children with only a yes or no response necessary to complete the question.

Each of the three pre- and post-questionnaires was scored and the results correlated in favor of positive viewing by those involved. The three pre-questionnaire results had already been tabulated and indicated that 80% of the kindergarten children were devoting a large portion of their time to unsupervised programming. It was expected that on the post-questionnaire (Appendices F, G and H), 80% of the respondents would indicate a curb on television watching and more intensive monitoring of television programming for students by parents, faculty, and students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Solution Strategy

A. Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

According to Johnson, Cooper, and Chance (1983), children whose parents had set rules for watching television attained higher I.Q.'s and had better grades in school.

The possibility of developing a curriculum in initial viewing skills has also become apparent. It has been suggested by the National Education Association that we find ways to increase the ability of children to use television selectively and view it critically. The association television staff feels that a curriculum in initial viewing skills is worth experimentation in this area. Robbins (1980) claims that the schools need to inculcate into children a disposition toward critical thinking, an ability to evaluate alternatives, and a habit of actively making decisions rather than passively accepting the messages delivered by this pervasive medium. Hornik (1981) believes that hours spent with television affect individuals in many ways, some of which are relevant to schooling. Szabo

and Landy (1981) found that children who received reading skills from their classroom teacher plus a televised reading program showed a significant increase in reading skills during the year.

Foster (1980) stresses the point that the influence of television is so real and because it starts at such an early age, a program of media education should begin as soon as children enter school. The eventual goal of such a program should be to help children understand how television influences their lives. Children should learn and be able to use the analytic tools necessary to probe the complex mechanisms used in the formulation of television programs.

Drukurs (1964) feels that children's programs should become a family problem and must be solved by the family all together. He believes that if there is too much dissension about programs the parent should remove a tube from the set, and no one, including the parents, should see any program until an agreement is reached.

Greenfield (1984) believes that in order to counteract the influence of the social information children get from television, parents or other adults

can increase the benefits and decrease the negative effects of watching television programs. She goes on to say that parents can affect what social knowledge children take away from a show by highlighting important information and by interpreting what is going on in the show.

Controlling what children are seeing on television has become a significant issue in the concluding section on Public Policy and Private Action. However, here it is worth noting that the concern about advertising directed to children is not limited to public interest groups and government regulatory agencies but is felt throughout the advertising and broadcasting industries. Ward (1978) and Turk (1979) have described the dilemma facing the industry, and Adler (1979) has forecasted some policy implications of this growing body of research. Finally, although the Federal Trade commission's (1978) proposal to limit advertising on children's television has been impounded, it is likely that there will be increased calls for changes in the structure of children's television and the nature of advertising directed to young viewers.

Enhancing television programming for our children would only seem reasonable in order to promote

its characteristics, which are sharing, cooperation, or even helping; all of which could be learned as easily as assaulting.

Still another approach might be to arrange children's days and activities in a manner that would provide children with radio listening, movies, reading, homework and free time for social interaction. Each of these activities would be included in a daily time schedule as well as time for television viewing.

Ritter (1984) reports that some people feel the final cure is to quit television forever. He talks about one of the most radical groups in America, the Society for the Eradication of Television. The Society's Director, Mary Dixon, claims, "Television retards the inner life of human beings. It destroys human interaction, squanders time and only draws viewers into abject addiction." She is not impressed with campaigns by do-gooders to stamp out television for a week or month. Mrs. Dixon theorizes that tune-out campaigns have been tried in cities as diverse as northwest suburban Elgin, Detroit, Michigan, and now, Richmond, Indiana. However, people always seem to tune in again when the campaigns end. Dixon insists there is but one cure. Swear off television, completely

and forever.

B. Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The solution selected for implementation was one which involved scheduling four periodic meetings with parents to introduce guest speakers, circulating guides of acceptable television programs, and arrange field trips to television stations.

The following items were discussed at the periodic meetings.

1. Conferences with parents on the importance of the problem and their part in the solution.
2. Conferences with teachers and the need for suggestions for continual problem solution strategies.
3. Suggestions for acceptable television programs for children and ways to stimulate parent/child watching and discussing.
4. Suggestions for ways to encourage children's responses to programs. Example, drawings, stories, vocabulary lists, etc.
5. Suggestions on ways to animate group

discussions with children on reality of the program.

6. Suggestions on ways to engage community representatives in scheduling recreational activities for the children.

C. Calendar Plan

The four periodic meetings were arranged according to the wishes of the parents. It was clearly understood that conflicting time schedules for working parents would be considered.

The tentative meeting dates were included in the following calendar plan:

August 13, 1984 — Practicum proposal was submitted to the faculty of Nova University.

August 27, 1984 — Work was begun on additions and/or revisions required.

Sept. 16, 1984 — Additions and revisions were sent to practicum reviewer.

Sept. 30, 1984 — Approval to implement the proposal was expected.

Sept. 30, 1984 through Oct. 14, 1984	Time was spent preparing, organizing, and developing a series of meetings.
Oct. 30, 1984	Meeting 1.
Nov. 13, 1984	Meeting 2.
Jan. 7, 1985	Meeting 3.
Jan. 16, 1985	Meeting 4.
March 1, 1985	Practicum report prepared and submitted to Nova University.
April 3, 1985	Approval and dissemination to cluster.

Schedule of Meetings - 1984

October 30, 1984 — I. Open Discussion

A. Purpose: To provide the author with the opportunity to explain his goals and objectives; to elicit understanding and support of the project.

B. Focus of discussion -- Questions related to the pre-questionnaire and pertinent information.

C. Guests -- all interested parents and teachers.

November 13, 1984 — II. Community Representative's Discussion

A. Purpose: To disseminate information on various neighborhood programs for children.

B. Speakers -- church, park, and business leaders.

C. Guests -- all interested parents and teachers.

January 7, 1985 — III. Major Television Representative's Meeting

A. Purpose
   1. To discuss what each channel offers as the best in children's programs.
   2. To request distribution of literature on excellent programs for children.
   3. To allow parents to voice their opinion on questionable programs for children.

B. Speakers -- members of the six major television stations.

C. Guests -- all interested parents and teachers.

January 16, 1985 — IV.

A. Purpose
   1. To return post-questionnaires and discuss relevant ideas.
   2. To distribute materials which pertain to the best of television

programs for children.

B. Guests -- parents and teachers.

D. Report of Action Taken

After completing the pre-questionnaires, the author met with parents, teachers, and students who were involved and discussed his goals, his objectives and answered questions pertinent to the project.

The second meeting was scheduled and community representatives were invited to the school to elaborate about their after-school programs. The invitations were written (Appendix D) and followed by two telephone calls. Seven representatives had been invited and six responded. Their respective organizations included the Boy Scouts of America, the Brownies of America, the Beverly Library, Ridge and Kennedy Parks, and the Beverly Gymnastic Center.

Each participant gave an in-depth but diversified talk about his after-school program. In addition, some provided demonstrations and distributed printed materials describing their unique service to the children. The response by the children and parents was enthusiastic and positive. Many students expressed a desire to join one of the organizations, and eagerly

filled out applications. Most amazing was the fact that many of these neighborhood children were totally unaware of the numerous and available after-school community activities.

The third meeting was to provide kindergarten children, parents, and teachers an opportunity to hear from representatives of the six major television stations. Each station was contacted by phone and then by letter explaining the project and the value of any suggestions the television stations could make. Each was asked to send a representative to discuss current ideas about good television viewing, especially those designed for children. The responses were slow, so the author found it necessary to initiate follow-up phone calls, especially since he felt that the participation by personnel of the television stations would be a most significant part of the implementation phase. However, the response was very disappointing. Only three of the six stations responded. Two of these stations sent literature with general information on children's programs. Detailed listings of the positive values of their contributions of the children's viewing in contrast to those of other stations were included.

Little was mentioned about the weaknesses of their programs. However, with the literature, there were some articles included which stressed the positive attributes children developed from watching television. One example was an article about the positive effect of cartoon images, (Mills and Cromley, 1983). They said, "A cartoon image, like Spiderman, can serve to remind children that they possess numerous abilities to help themselves." Portrayed as a problem solver, it was suggested that "Scooby Doo can help children learn both self and interpersonal relating skills."

In brief, all three television stations sent literature that enhanced their children's programs. However, the author learned through conversation with one of the program directors, that the reason for the station's lackadaisical approach to problems posed by the public, is that no television station wishes its viewers to be selective of its programs. To have all of them watched is the ultimate goal. Advertising, and subsequently the money, makes or breaks a television station. Indiscriminate viewing is encouraged, he remarked.

In view of the fact that none of the television

representatives responded to the invitation to address the parents, teachers, and children, the author felt it incumbent upon himself, as the originator of the study of children's television programs, to explain to the parents, teachers, and children insofar as he could, the reason why the television networks had not complied with his wishes. Suprisingly, their opinions seemed to coincide quite closely with the information he had gotten from his conversation with one of the directors.

The discussion following brought forth the idea that the responsibility for what their children watched was primarily that of the parents and seemed to bring into sharper focus the desire of the parents to supervise more closely the programs in which their children showed interest.

Many parents admitted, however, that hitherto they had not realized the very definite thrust towards better children's shows and that they would consistently address the various stations with their acknowledgement of their new awareness of better shows and their desire for them to continue as long as the emphasis is directed toward improvement.

The final meeting provided all interested

parties a chance to respond to the post-questionnaires, (Appendix F, G, and H) and distribute materials considered applicable to good television. Most important was the opportunity given to parents, children, and teachers to express their individual opinions and feelings about what had transpired and exchange ideas about the positive value of the line of communications established.

CHAPTER V

Results, Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Results

This practicum was specifically designed to enhance and enrich ways in which parents would supervise the kinds of television programs their children view. The plan chosen for the implementation of this problem was the development of four meetings in which children, parents, and teachers participated. First, the pre-questionnaires (Appendices A, B, and C) were completed by the students, parents, and teachers. This survey instrument provided the impetus for this problem. Second, community involvement provided a significant contribution in demonstrating desirable activities for children. Third, the television stations sent literature and suggestions which gave new insight into television viewing. Last, a post-questionnaire (Appendices D, E, and F) helped to determine how effective the meetings were.

The author of this practicum had been concerned for some time about the effect unsupervised television watching was having on the kindergarten children.

His concern, reflecting the sentiments of both parents and teachers, confirmed the need to establish definite guidelines.

As mentioned previously, the first pre-questionnaire established the need to seek viable alternatives to indiscriminate television viewing. Of the thirty-one students who participated originally, twenty-eight remained in the study. Twenty-eight parents and twenty-eight students answered the pre-questionnaire (Appendices A, B, and C). Approximately ninety per cent remained active within the practicum program. The author was impressed with the tabulation of the results and the great concern of the parents.

The first solution stressed introducing after-school community activities and suggested this idea to the children, parents and teachers. The author was astounded by the lack of knowledge exhibited by many of the children and parents in regard to what their own community offers in the way of leisure pursuits. The invitation to the various community agencies to conduct information sessions for the children, parents, and teachers met with a resounding, positive response. Each organization provided a wealth of literature, and many included colorful and

interesting illustrations of neighborhood activities. Probably the most impressive part of each presentation was the "hands-on" experience that the children enjoyed. They were able to "sample" much that was shown. The author can attest to the fact that involving the community leaders in any project is a wise decision.

The second solution, though not so provocative as the first, led the author to some valuable insights into television programming and the responsibilities of the broadcasting stations.

It would be seemly to agree, that given the preponderance of evidence, networks would and should assume some social responsibility for the kinds of programs with which their stations bombard children for at least four or five hours a day. Figures indicate that approximately five thousand hours of children's time is spent in indiscriminate viewing. This time is equivalent to the amcunt spent earning a bachelor's degree.

In essence, the general tone within the literature received from the television stations indicates that the television industry does more in children's programming than is generally recognized. Claims that cartoon

images can serve as invaluable therapy in helping children solve their everyday school problems were substantiated by the example that the social relaxing entertaining aspects of television have positive effects on children.

One disturbing thought remained with the writer after thoroughly perusing the station's literature. The writers of the various pieces of literature concurred that there is very little likelihood that children will watch less television. It is considered their medium of entertainment, and it is assumed that they should be able to control it, identify with it, share it constructively with their peers and parents.

The bottom line seems to be that it is not what the children want to watch, but how much money can be made by each station. Advertising is the sole existence of the television industry. As long as the products advertised are purchased by the viewers, profits are made. Although the author was greatly disappointed by the uncaring attitude displayed by the stations, he has been made very much aware that money for the industry seems to be the motivating force in television.

The fourth and final meeting was diligent

and proved very encouraging. Post-questionnaires (Appendices F, G and H) were administered and after administration were discussed. Eighty per cent of the participants had responded positively to the need to establish curbs on television watching and more intensive monitoring of programs by parents, faculty, and students. Students, parents, and teachers were not seemingly convinced that television viewing, when done with certain limits of discretion, supervision, and knowledge, can become an asset for all that use it.

B. Conclusions

The results of both formative and evaluative research support the conclusion that television can exert a powerful influence on the young viewer in ways that are quite independent of the particular content that is portrayed on the screen.

Most of the research on the topic of television and children has been focused upon the effects rather than the uses of television. After an extensive review of the literature, the author can include that, the research question asked most often is: What does television do to the viewer? However, one would

also pose the question: What does the viewer do to, or with the television?

Another apparent concern answered by the review of the literature was that television does not appear to have a long lasting displacing effect on children's lifestyles. Those who watch television most use it as a time filling function. It was found that television may fill in and kill time, for those who do not have the education, money, or ability for other outlets. In essence, television is cheap and convenient; it is on tap to be turned on when there is nothing else available.

Another area of concern on parents and their role focuses on their children's viewing habits. Instead, an active role is absolutely essential if parents wish to establish any form of dialogue with their children concerning the importance that television has on the young person's life. Parents are beginning to realize that the quality and content of television programming have become a subject of national concern. They are becoming more aware of the fact that they cannot sit back passively and wait for the nation to solve their problems. The solving must begin in their own homes, and it is here that they must

act.

However, it seems quite evident that there are grounds for serious concern about the role that television plays in children's lives. Undoubtedly, these concerns cover a broad spectrum of issues ranging from the sheer amount of time that children spend with the television set, to more focused concerns about the impact of its content and its effect on children's lives.

In conclusion, it is much easier to attack television than to defend it. It seems the television medium has been on the receiving end of gratuitous blows from various pressure groups. These groups look upon the medium as an easy target because of its visibility, impact, and the fact it is a regulated industry.

C. Recommendations

The coming together of people who have a similar problem for the purpose of discussing and

finding an answer promotes a keener interest and a determination in each to add to the solution of the problem". Thus in this practicum, the writer found that the social experience of communicating had brought forth from parents and teachers workable ideas and a united effort to find ways and means towards selectivity in the television programs their children watch. He also believes, hopefully, that having as its basis, a common concern, this united group may become a positive force for the best in children's television viewing. The information gleaned from this work could be disseminated to other groups of kindergarteners, parents, and teachers.

Recommendations/Specific Areas

1. Become aware of the various outside organizations and groups within your own community setting.
2. Plan on very little help with this particular problem from any television station because their attitude was one of evasion and disinterest.
3. Help the parents within your own setting realize that this particular problem does exist; inform them of its implications.

4. Rather than accenting the negative influences, television is having on children, emphasizing the positive benefits.
5. The use of the survey questionnaires seem most appropriate for this type of problem.
6. If you are working within a school setting, utilize more than one grade level (examples K-3).
7. Parental and peer teacher input proved to be a significant factor in the solution strategy.
8. In the future, continue to provide worthwhile literature on your problem to parents, students, and teachers within your own setting.

D. Dissemination

The final practicum report will be presented to the writers' Doctoral Cluster for Early Childhood Education.

In addition a copy of this report will be made available to the parents, teachers, community members, and television stations who helped make this practicum a successful endeavor.

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APPENDIX A

Pre-Questionnaire for Parents --

Their attitudes on television viewing of their children.

(A.) Do you feel that your child is watching too much television?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(1) Do you feel you should monitor the amount of television your children watch?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(2) Do you think the child should be allowed to watch questionable movies? Ex. horror and crime?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(3) Do you think that television is affecting your child's outdoor activities?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(4) Do you think television might interfere with his school work?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(5) Does television interfere with your child's other social activities?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(6) Is your child adversely affected by any programs he watches?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(7) Do you think there are any positive affects on your child from the programs he watches?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(8) Do you think the viewing of television might affect his school grades?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(9) Do you find that indiscriminate viewing of television has caused any changes in your child's behavior?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(10) Do you think that parents should be the sole advisor as to what their child watches or do you feel teacher suggestions might be helpful?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

APPENDIX B

Pre-Questionnaire for Teachers --

Their attitude on television watching for their pupils.

A. Do you believe teachers should be concerned about excessive television viewing by their students?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(1) Do you believe teachers could be a constructive influence on television viewing?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(2) Do you believe teachers could be a constructive influence on television programming?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(3) Do you believe teachers should build classroom activities around good programs?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(4) Is their much resistance from parents when teachers assign students to watch certain programs?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(5) Do you find it important that children use television selectively and critically?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(6) Do you feel that television is affecting declining reading and math scores?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(7) Do you think that viewing too much television has caused children to be unable to distinguish between reallity and fantasy?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(8) Do you believe that advice on good weekly programs could be sent home to the parents via the students?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(9) Do you believe television should be used to air approved television programs within the school?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(10) Do you believe that teachers have the duty to combat the intellectual tyranny of television?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

APPENDIX C

Pre-Questionnaire for Students -- Attitude on Viewing.

A. Do you watch television?

yes _____ no _____

1. Do you have a television set?

yes _____ no _____

2. Do you watch television at home?

yes _____ no _____

3. Does mom or dad tell you what to watch?

yes _____ no _____

4. Do you care about what you watch?

yes _____ no _____

5. Do you watch television Saturday morning?

yes _____ no _____

6. Do you like comedies? Ex. Different Strokes?

yes _____ no _____

7. Do you like monster movies and cartoons? Ex. Inspector Gadget.

yes _____ no _____

8. Do you like police stories?

yes _____ no _____

9. Do you watch television when you're eating dinner?

yes _____ no _____

10. Do you stay up late to watch television?

yes _____ no _____

APPENDIX D

9510 S. Prospect Ave.
Chicago, Illinois
November 5, 1985

Mr. James Johnson
Boy Scouts of America
9805 S. Vanderpoel Ave.
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Johnson:

On Tuesday, November 13, at 1:00 p.m. we are having a program for students from kindergarten through third grade who are seeking viable alternatives to television watching for after-school activities. Parents are also invited.

We'd appreciate your presence since knowledge of your program would be very valuable to our students. Many of them are unaware of the positive, constuctive activities offered in their own community.

Sincerely,

David Richards

APPENDIX E

9810 S. Prospect Ave.
Chicago, Illinois
November 10, 1984

Station Manager
WLS-TV Channel 7
190 N. State Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Sir:

On January 7, 1985, we are having an assembly with our students, kindergarten through third grade, and their parents. The purpose of the assembly will be to discuss good television viewing and programs for our children.

If at all possible, we would like to have a representative from your station address the group. We would also appreciate any timely literature on the subject.

Sincerely,

David Richards

WMAQ-TV5 NBC Television Stations Division
National Broadcasting Company, Inc.
Merchandise Mart Plaza
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Alexis H. Sarkisian
Manager, Community Affairs

January 8, 1985

David Richards
10321 S. Oakley
Chicago, IL 60643

Dear David:

Thank you very much for recent letter concerning the school assembly on good television viewing. Enclosed please find the Viewer's Guide for an NBC Special Treat, OUT OF TIME, which is one example of how we can become involved with schools.

As we do not know any of the specifics about your school and therefore did not know how to reach you by phone to discuss the event in further detail, I did want you to know that we would certainly be happy to work with you in the future.

If we can be of any further assistance before your upcoming assembly, please don't hesitate to contact my office at 861-5447.

I look forward to hearing from you again and best wishes for a very successful event.

Sincerely,

Alexis H. Sarkisian

Alexis H. Sarkisian

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APPENDIX F

Post Questionnaire for Parents

Their attitudes on television viewing of their children after four sessions.

(1) Was your child watching too much television?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(2) Do you feel it has been proven that you should monitor the amount of television your children watch?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(3) Do you now believe that questionable movies can have a profound affect on your child?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(4) Do you have a better idea of how excessive television viewing can affect your child's other activities?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(5) Is it easier to understand how television does interfere with your child's school work?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(6) Do you think there are any positive affects on your child now that you are monitoring what he watches?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(7) Does your child watch less television now?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(8) Has your child replaced television viewing with any new after-school acitivites?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(9) Has the entire family's attitudes on television

changed significantly?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(10) Do you concur with the author that there are many good children's television programs available to children?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(11) Do you feel that any of the four sessions affected you or your child's television viewing habits?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

APPENDIX G

Post-Questionnaire for Teachers

Their attitudes on television watching for their pupils after four sessions.

(A) Now do you believe that teachers should be concerned about excessive television by their students?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(1) Do you believe that any of the four sessions enhanced your knowledge of television and its affects?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(2) Do you believe any of the sessions had any impact on your student's television viewing habits. (Applicable only to students involved.)

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

APPENDIX G

(3) Do you now consider yourself a constructive influence on television viewing?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(4) Do you now consider yourself or your colleagues a constructive influence on television programming?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(5) Would you now feel more motivated to build classroom activities around good television programs?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(6) Do you now believe parents would be more agreeable to have their children watch teacher assigned programs?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(7) Do you now have a better understanding of how too much television could affect your

student's grades?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(8) Do you understand the relevancy of children being able to select critically good television programs?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(9) Would you now be willing to openly discuss with parents their children's television viewing habits?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

(10) Would you be willing to enlighten parents about other activities their children could substitute for television?

strongly agree _____ mildly agree _____

uncertain _____ mildly disagree _____

strongly disagree _____

APPENDIX H

Post-Questionnaire for Students

Attitude on viewing after four sessions.

(A) Do you watch television?

Yes _____ No _____

(1) Did you enjoy any of the assemblies we had at school about television?

Yes _____ No _____

(2) Are you participating in any new activities after school?

Yes _____ No _____

(3) Are you still watching as much television as before?

Yes _____ No _____

(4) Are Mom and Dad helping you choose your television programs?

Yes _____ No _____

(5) Does your teacher give you any suggestions on what programs to watch?

Yes _____ No _____

(6) Do you think Mom and Dad watch as much television as they used to?

Yes _____ No _____

(7) Does your family talk about television programs that are watched?

Yes _____ No _____

(8) Do you still watch the same television programs on Saturday morning?

Yes _____ No _____

(9) If your television set was broken temporarily do you think you could find something else to do?

Yes _____ No _____

(10) If your television set was broken forever, and Mom and Dad said you couldn't have another one, do you think you could find something else to do?

Yes _____ No _____